More Truth Than Poetry

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By Wm. E. Hooker
"Uncle Bill"

True Stories Told
In Simple Rhymes
Of Southern Folk
And Southern Times

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Most Sincerely
Wm. E. Hooker

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The Parke-Harper Publishing Company
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Uncle Bill—His Book

This is Uncle Bill's first book—its reception should be so generous that there may be many more. He is a most prolific writer of Southern folklore and homely philosophy in verse form. He has well been termed by his admirers the Riley of the South, and yet he is not an imitator. He possesses a style all his own—that plays upon the harp-strings of the soul. He sees the ideal and the sympathetic in everyday, common-place incidents that do not appeal to more prosaic minds. His intuition is keen, his sense of the ridiculous and the sentimental strongly developed, and the hopes and griefs of the lowly possess for his facile pen a greater appeal than the annals of the mighty. Greater power to his muse and may his audiences continue to grow.

CLIO HARPER,

Past President Authors' and Composers' Society of Arkansas.

Little Rock, Ark., May 1, 1923.

Preface

This little volume of verse I have named MORE TRUTH THAN POETRY. I know that it contains real truths; my readers must judge whether or not it is real poetry.

I do not pretend to be a poet, nor am a man of letters. Poetry with me is but a pastime. My occupation is that of traveling salesman. These poems are all based upon incidents I have actually witnessed or conversations I have overheard and in no case has the true setting been altered for the sake of rhyme or meter.

For twenty-seven years I have been a commercial traveler. The greater part of that time I have traveled in what is called the Old South, selling goods to the Old Time Southern Trade in the Old Time Southern way. I have learned to understand the real type of Southern negro and have sympathy for and with them. These poems are for the most part their stories set in verse; in all cases they are true stories, or stories that have truth for their inspiration.

If the little volume meets with the approval of my friends and those who appreciate the folk-lore of the South, my fondest hopes will have been realized.

WILLIAM E. HOOKER.

THOMAS AND HIS MULE

THERE stands beside the depot
In a little southern town,
A darkey and an old gray mule
And a wagon tumbled down.
They meet the local train each day,
In hope a trunk to haul.
Some days they haul two or three,
But most days, none at all.

I have often seen him standing there,
All bent with toil and age;
The old gray mule looked that way, too,
For he'd passed the working stage.
It sort of touched a spark in me,
Made me feel kind of queer,
Sort of a sympathetic thought,
As though their end was near.

I thought a kindly word might help,
And a two-bit piece might cheer.
I called him Uncle and I said, "How's trade,
Is there any business here?"
He looked at me and smiled
In a pleased sort of way,
As if kind words meant more to him
Than almost any pay.

"There ain't much work here, nohow,
For an old nigger such as me,
I reckon that we's kind of slow,
The mule is old, you see.
Folks like their baggage moved in style,
In automobiles and trucks,
And ain't got time to wait for me,
No, Boss, I don't get much."

"But I don't need such a powerful lot,
'Cause I lives all alone,
Just this old gray mule and me,
De rest has all done gone.
I had a wife and daughter, Boss,
That's all I had 'twas mine,
De good Lord done called 'em home,—
I's just finishin' out my time.

"It's just nigger foolishment, I guess,
But it seems someway to me
That the Lord done tole this mule of mine
That we must sure agree
To stick together till the last,
Till our day's work is o'er,
Den He sure will call us home,
Where we will work no more."

—Atlanta, Ga.

IT IS IF IT ISN'T

"IT IS if it isn't. If it does it don't.
What kind of sense is that?
If I's poor I's rich. If I's rich I's poor.
Now how shall I know where I'm at?
When I'm sick I'm well, pain don't hurt,
You reckon I believe that's so?
When I's sick I's sick. When I'm broke I's poor.
I'm doggone sure that I know.

"That kind of preaching means nothing to me;
Maybe white folks understand,
But in a colored church, to colored folks,
You must preach of the Promised Land.
The preacher says that sort of New Thought,
Sort of scientific, you see;
New Thought all right, I'll agree to that,
But it's too scientific for me.

"The idea is catching, it's all over town;
Painless dentist, he's got it, too;
Says, 'Now I won't hurt you the least little bit!'
I thought I would die, and that's true.
Says love thought make a sick man well,—
When in love I was sick sure enough.

I got married to Liza, but now I am wiser,—
Love sickness, Oh my! but it's tough!"

—Atlanta, Ga.

JUSTICE IS JUSTICE

THE old Justice of Peace in a small southern
town
Where justice is justice and square deals
abound,
Called his court to order in the usual way
To administer justice and uphold fair play.
The clerk of his court, who was jailer, too,
Brought in one lone nigger without ado.

"Your Honor, sir, it don't seem right,
They pinched this here Sam boy last night;
I know you know him and know him well,
I reckon he's got a story to tell.
He never done no wrong that ever I saw,
But Justice is Justice and Law is Law."

The old judge scowled and said to him,
"What nigger devilment have you been in?
Ain't been stealing chickens or shooting crap
Or selling gin or the likes of that?
Look at me, boy, square in the eye,
You know what I do to niggers that lie."

"Yes, sir, Judge, I reckon I know,
There's a place on the chain gang bad niggers
go,
But, please, Judge, I wants to say,
It happened in just this sort of way:
I was trying to do like the Good Book tell,
Be kind to a stranger and treat him well.

"A traveling man at Smith's hotel
Said he was sick, not feeling well,
And asked me could I git him a little liquor;
'Bout a pint so he would git well the quicker.
I wasn't sure but I kinda thought
Deacon Johnson had some that might be
bought.

"So, Judge, I just bought a little bit,
Paid a dollar, too, big price for it,
And when I fetched it up to him,
He just grabbed my neck and run me in.
Said he was a prohibitioner and on my trail,
And that I would have to go to jail.

"Now, Judge, I don't think that's fair;
I was doing a kindness and treating him
square
It's against the law, I guess that's true,
But I knowed you'd know just what to do;

So I've told you everything, that's so,
And please, Mister Judge, won't you let me
go?"

The old Judge smiled and whispered low,
"Do you reckon, Sam, if I let you go,
You could get me a quart or maybe more
Of the same kind of liquor I had before?
You will find the jug in that pile of straw;
For Justice is Justice and Law is Law."

—Atlanta, Ga.

STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN

THIS is the age of caution and care;
No Accident Weeks are everywhere.
SAFETY FIRST signs are always in sight.
WATCH YOUR STEP painted left and right.
STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN means more by
far
Than the warning of an approaching car.
I know a place where that sign should be
Right in plain sight for all to see.
I would paint a large one if I had my way
And light it at night as bright as day.

Right down there at the City Hall
Is the most dangerous place of all;

The place I mean is where you go
For a Marriage License. Do you know
If STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN were painted
there,
Some prospective bride and groom may be-
ware
Of a coming danger and hesitate
And change their minds before too late;
There is many an accident, some severe,
From lack of caution as they enter here.

—Atlanta, Ga.

THE PROMISED LAND

DOGGONE sure I know I's froze;
My feet am dead, so is my nose;
And eats! Ain't had none today—
I craves my fillin' right away.
If ever I gits back to that Georgia town
Where they ain't no icicles hangin' roun',
Where there's pork and 'taters and possum
stew,
Oh! Lordy! Lordy! What would I do!

I just would like to find that man
Who said, up north's the Promised Land
With little work and lots of money;
He called it the Land of Milk and Honey,

Where niggers are the same as whites
And call you Mister and use you right—
That wages were good and would go higher,—
Oh! Lordy! Lordy! He's a doggone liar!

Can't call me Mister. No! Not me;
I ain't the same as white folks; don't want to be;
There's Wops and Dagoes and Hunks and Finns,
Ain't no more like niggers than I's like them.
They's white outside, I know that's so,
But black as the Devil where it don't show;
I know I's black and I wants to be.—
Oh! Lordy! Lordy! 'Tain't no place for me.

Promised Land, that's right! That's sure the name,—
Promise this and that, it's all the same;
Whatever they tell you, it won't be so;
But believe me now, I sure do know,
I'm going down south where the cotton grows,
Where there ain't no icicles and frozen toes;
Where a nigger's a nigger I wants to be,
Oh! Lordy! That's the Promised Land for me!

—Albany, Ga.

SMILES

WHAT is as sweet as the smile of a child,
Say a little girl just about three?
Our own, they are nearer, to us they are dearer,
When smiling with mischief or glee.

Did you ever notice a colored child's smile?
Those big, round eyes so dark?
They are a reflection, to thought give expression
Of the joy in their little hearts.

It is not always joy, there's sorrow there, too,
As those big round eyes fill with tears,
But not often lasting, more like a storm passing,
When a smile through the tears appears.

So little will make a colored child happy,
Most any small thing will do;
Now just you try, you will never deny,
That smile will bring smiles to you.

—Atlanta, Ga.

COLORED IDEA OF OPPORTUNITY

WHO says opportunity comes but once,
A-knocking at your door,
And if you done be away from home
It won't come back no more?

I don't believe no such thing as that,
'Cause I knows for sure 'tain't so;
Opportunity keeps coming all the time
Keeps knocking more and more.

'Tain't 'cause opportunity don't come,
'Cause it ain't never been away;
It's just because we's sort of blind
And don't see it every day.

Maybe the opportunity you mean
Is the get-rich-quick kind,
They don't come to colored folks,
Them's powerful hard to hind.

The kind of opportunity I means
And the kind that'll always pay,
Is the kind that always stays around
And never goes away.

There's opportunity both good and bad,
It's the good I try to find;

Them bad ones is just to pester you
And make you waste your time.

The devil always finds some work
For idle hands to do,
But if you is busy all the time
Won't have no effect on you.

And you can't be so busy
But what you will have the time,
And just loads of opportunity
To be mighty good and kind.

I sort of think the trouble is,
We looks for the big things to do;
Maybe they won't come at all,
If they do, they's mighty few.

They's little opportunities all about;
Maybe only a word or cheer;
They's the kind that count the most,
And they is always here.

Jes' take a lot of little things
And put 'em in a pile,
Don't take long 'fore it's something big,
Like an opportunity worth while.

—Memphis, Tenn.

KU KLUX KLAN

WHAT, me? A KU KLUX? I reckon, boss,
you can't see,
I's about as black as I kin be.
Ain't no nigger Ku Klux, that I know.
Ku Klux is white folks; that am so.

Ain't no more skeered of them than they's of
me;
What has I got to be skeereed of I don't see?
Don't know who they is; they don't tell,
But they all knows me; I know that well.

Den Ku Klux, dey ain't nothing new;
They was powerful active, I know that's true,
Way back as far as in sixty-five,
And I heard tell some's still alive.

Ku Klux don't do no harm, and never would,
All I ever knowed they did is good;
The devil don't do nothing bad,
Skeers you so you will be good, or wish you
had.

I ain't 'feared of the devil; why should I be?
He ain't got no call to pester me.

I just do the very best I can,
Don't fear the devil or Ku Klux Klan.

Last winter when it was mighty cold,
There wasn't muh work for them what's old.
More than one nigger got a helping hand
Or a basket of food from the Ku Klux Klan.

There is some folks, both black and white ,
That's left this town in the dead of night.
They's been told a-plenty to be good,
If the devil didn't get 'em, the Ku Klux would.

All good niggers have nothing to fear
And I's mighty glad Ku Klux is here.
But bad folks has ust got to understand
The mighty power of the Ku Klux Klan.

—At Rock Island Depot, Little Rock, Ark.

LOOKING DOWN THE ROAD

IN a small negro cabin,
Near the outskirts of hte town,
Lived an old colored woman,
Her name was Liza Brown.
I have passed her cabin many times,
Sometimes early, oft times late,
But she was always standing there
Beside the road-side gate.

I doubt if I have ever seen
A more forlorn or lonesome sight
Than that lonely colored woman;
I was sure things were not right.
When passing by the other day
I thought I would see
If there was material for a story there,
There was * * * A tragedy.

She told me why she lived alone
And I will tell to you,
Using her words as best I can:
Her story, I know 'twas true.
There are many cases much like her's
If te truth were only known;
Of lonesomeness and longing
In what was once a happy home.

"I ain't got no folks left here,
They's all done gone away;
Ain't got no kin to visit,
So I's just got to stay.
Can't go to no poor-house,
'Cause I gets a pension sent to me;
Poor-house's no place nohow,
Where colored folks wants to be.

"I had two boys and my old man,
As fine boys as you ever see;

Den long comes de war
What took my boys away from me.
My old man got a sickness
And I done buried him;
My boys got killed n the war,
At least the paper said 'twas them.

"I thinks sometimes my boys ain't dead.
I don't know how they knowed;
De only way I knows they's killed
'Cause it was on the paper they showed.
I just stand here by the gate
A lookin' down the street,
To see if I sees 'um comin'
So I's here for dem to meet.

"I ain't gwine to be here much longer,
A-looking' down the road,
'Cause if they don't soon come home
I'll think the good Lawd knowed
Of a better place for us to meet
And I will go to them,
Where I won't be lonesome any more,
'Cause I's waited till the end."

I passed the cabin yesterday;
There was a wreath upon the door;
Her days of watchful waiting
Were ended. And no more

Will I see her standing at the gate
"A looking down the road,"
She had gone on to meet them
In the place of their abode.

—Memphis, Tenn.

NEGRO PHILOSOPHY

"IS I happy? Well, I reckon so;
Being happy is the only hting I know.
I got no reason feelin' blue—
What good does the misery feein' do?

"I ain't got nothin', but that ain't baid;
Can't steal from me what I never had;
I ain't nobody; don't expect to be;
I's just happy 'cause I's me.

"What's good bein' what you're not?
Wishin' you had what you haven't got?
Thinkin' of what you's goin' to be,
When I knows I'll be just nothin' but me?

"Folks ain't happy when they wants lots,
And never glad of what they's got;
I don't 'spect nothin' to come to me,
So I's never disappointed. See?"

—Helena, Ark.

THE LOST HOUR

STRANGER, will you please enlighten me
About this time table? I can't see
How it can be. At 4:15 we arrive,
And leave again at 3:25?

According to this, and it's just as clear,
We leave fifty minutes before we're here;
Difference in time, I know that's so,
But where in thunder does that hour go?

At home, I get up at seven,
And go to bed at eleven;
Here I'll stay a-bed 'till eight,
And go to bed an hour late.

I can't understand in anyway
How twenty-three hours make a day.
But this I positively know,
According to the time table it's so.

I am not as quick to figure out
As you who travel all about;
But there's twenty-four hours in a day.
I don't care what time tables say.

—Little Rock, Ark.

AS A MAN THINKETH

MY TEXT this morning is going to be,
AS A MAN THINKETH SO IS HE.
I ain't going to preach like I most always do,
And tell you what the Devil will do to you.
Regular preaching, you know too well,
All about going to Heaven or Hell,—
You know what you'll get when you die;
We talks and sings of the Sweet By-and-By.

I am going to preach about here and now.
How you can go to Heaven if you know how,
Without having having to wait until you die,
To go to Heaven in the Sweet By-and-By,
There's a Heaven here, I know it's true,
A place there right now for me and you.
If you reads your Bible to understand,
You'll find right here is the Promsied Land.

Now AS A MAN THINKETH SO IS HE;
What does that mean to you and me?
If you thinks you's happy, happy you'll be.
If you thinks you's sad, you's sad; now see?
What yo uthinks you is, you is; that's so,
No matter what they tells you, you ought to know;

Think bad and you're bad; think good and
you're good;
I could not say it plainer if I would.

The kind of a Heaven that I mean
Is a Harmony Heaven, a kind unseen;
But a Heaven where you can go right now,
'Thout askin' us preachers the when and how;
Start thinking happy thoughts this minute.
You will be in Heaven, right square in it;
Think unhappy thoughts and I want to tell
You will and this minute plumb in Hell.

It don't always work in every way;
We ain't had enough practice, so they say.
I can't think I's rich just yet
And have all the money I wants to get,
But I's going to practice mighty strong,
Thinking that the money is coming along,
And rich and happy I will be,
'Cause AS A MAN THINKETH, SO IS HE.

—Atlanta, Ga.

THE COMMITTEE OF ONE

AS I CALLED at the desk for my mail and
key,
A colored beyy boy said to me:

"Beg pardon, sir, could I speak to you
Kind of private like, just a minute or two?"
"Sure you can," I replied; "talk right ahead,"
And this is what the bell boy said:

"You know, boss, I belongs to the colored
church,
And goes every Sunday when I don't work;
Last Sunday when our preacher preached
He read your poem for the good it teached,
About 'As a Man Thinketh So Is He,'
And said with you he would sure agree.

"I told the preacher I knowed you well,
Least you were staying at the hotel,—
Not exactly knowed you, but you was a guest,
I had taken your pants to have them pressed,
And you was kind of pleasant like to me,
Give me a tip and was real gentlemanly.

"How I knowed that you was you,
I seed your picture and poems, too,
In the evening paper where it said,
Your colored poems should be read;
And the preacher asked me if I could
Just kind of see you if I would.

"Tell you I was 'pointed a committee of one
And tell the good things our church has done,

And ask you would you like to give
A couple of dollars or maybe five
To keep the church work alive?"

(Note.—Did he get it? What would you do
If a compliment like that were paid to you?)

—Memphis, Tenn.

MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION

DE congregation will come to order
And de meetin' will begin.
'Tain't gwine to be a preachin' meetin'
To fight the Devil and his sin,
But to settle an important question
'Cause we does seem divided,
And once dis question's settled
It sure will be desided.

There's just about a half of you
Who thinks different than the other,
And what we's got to do right now
Is to bring these halves together,
Sister Smith and Brother Aaron
Says they 'lows they's right
And ain't gwine to give in to nobody
Without a bitter fight.

The question is, what shall we do?
'Bolish our young folks society,
'Cause older members of the congregation
Thinks our young ladies don't use propriety?
Says they dress like these here flappers
In a manner that is strangely bold—
Thinks its just a meeting place for lovers,
And the church done lost its hold.

Brother Aaron, he's past eighty,
He's gone by the judging age;
Sister Smith weighs nigh two hundred,
Can't say she's in the flapper stage.
The question is just as plain
As it can be to me.
Those what ain't is jealous
Of those what is, you see.

—Atlanta, Ga.

EXCLUSIVENESS

IS IT a mark of distinction,
Or an attribute worthy of praise,
To be considered extremely exclusive
In these our most progressive days?

Who ordained the exclusive church,
A church for a special few,

Where the elite and elect may worship
In seclusion from me and you?

It is hard for me to understand
Why one should feel above,
Or stand apart or hold aloof
From universal love.

A hermit is always exclusive;
It requires no effort of mind
To be narrow and mean and selfish,
Or of no use to mankind.

Does history on its honor roll
Name those in any case
Who have been extremely exclusive?
Have they earned an honored place?

It is the INCLUSIVE not EXCLUSIVE mind
That broadens and expands the soul,—
The mind that includes and is a part
Of mankind as a whole.

—Atlanta, Ga.

COLORED EVOLUTION

AM I a monkey, mother dear,
'Cause I do monkey shines?
Nurse says you were a monkey, too,
Once upon a time.

Says my grandpa's grandpa
Lived up in the trees,
An' ate nuts and figs and bugs and worms
And nasty things like these.

There ain't any white monkeys, are there?
All monkeys are black like nurse;
I guess it's so, but I would like to know,
'Cause colored kids act much worse.

Is it true that a long time ago,
Before we had houses and things,
We had long tails and walked on our hands
And couldn't even talk or sing?

Nurse said we lived on the earth before,
And did such funny things,
That the next time we live here, if we are good
We are going to be Angels with wings.

If this is true, what will poor nurse do?
'Cause there is one thing that I know;
Angels are white, all shiny and bright,
For the Bible tells us so.

—Atlanta, Ga.

NIGGER, WHERE YOU BEEN?

FOR a number of years I have been obliged to call
In Southern cities, large and small,

As a traveling salesman to Southern trade,
And many a friendship I have made.
I think I know and understand
The Southern negro and his demands.

A down South "nigger" in a Georgia town
Who was ball-boy and waiter and, as often
found,
Sometimes a porter and chambermaid, too,
For there's no class of work but he would do;
He was lazy and shiftless and careless and
slow,
But faithful and honest, undoubtedly so.

Jake was his name, least we called him so,
The only name that he would know.
He carried my bag from the train one day
And loitered and loafed along the way,
Arrived at the hotel and ambled in.
I was tired of waiting and said to him,
"Nigger, where you been?"

He looked at me, his face a-smile.
"Yes, suh, Boss, I's quite a while,
But, Cap'n, Suh, you know I use care;
Don't dare set no grips nowhere
'Cause they's liable to bust and your refresh-
ments run out.

Policeman he's always standing about, smell
it and he'd say:
"Nigger, where you been?"

"Yes, suh, Boss, I does my best;
I sure got to have some time to rest.
Sleep's what I git everything else but,
I moves along in the same old rut,
And when this nigger comes to die,
An' goes to my mansions in the sky,
Saint Peter, he'll say, to me,
"Nigger, where you been?"

—Macon, Ga.

MAMMY

A FRIEND from the north came to visit me
In my Southern home;
We talked of the different customs
And the changes that had come.
The conversation drifted
As it will in every case,
To the difference in our attitude
As regards the colored race.

He said he did not understand
How we could endure,

With colored people everywhere
How could we feel secure?
"There is very little use," I said,
"No matter what I say,
You Northerners can not understand
Our negroes and their way.

"Does it seem strange to you, my friend,
That I have implicit confidence and trust
In the old colored Mammy
Who has stod faithfully by us,
In sickness and in sorrow,
In health and joy, the same?
She wept with us in trouble,
And smiled when we smiled again.

"She nursed our babies, every one;
No one could be more true;
Can soothe a baby when it cries
As mother could not do;
I have seen her take them in her arms,
Their head on her old black breast,
And sing them negro lullabies
Until their eyes were closed in rest.

"My children love their mammy,
And she loves the children, too,
Their love is a kind you can't understand,
Northern people seldom do.

Their skin is black, but their souls are white,
Their reward is just as sure;
So, my friend, we will trust to the end,
That is why we feel secure."

—Atlanta, Ga.

THE TOURIST TOWN

THE town does sure seem citified;
We have a Pullman car each day;
She comes in the morning on thirty-six,
Thirty-seven takes her away.
You see we get some tourists now,
Come to escape the winter's cold;
'Tain't exactly the sporty class,
For most of um is old.

We must have nigh a hundred now,
More's coming, so they say;
I'm going to rent my house,—
By Gosh! It sure does pay.
I'm going to fix a place up in the barn
For the wife and me to live;
You know I can get twenty dollars a month?
Tourists don't care what they give.

Now there's the Hotel Begel,
It's getting mighty swell;

Used to be a dollar a day,
Now it's two dollars, so they tell;
Going to have a bath room
And be fixed up out of sight;
Must be thirty folks there now,—
Some doings on Saturday night.

Going to have a Chamber of Commerce, too;
Let um know the town's awake;
We'll advertise to beat the band,
And call our pond a lake.
We'll have to have some bathing girls
If we can turn the trick;
But I'm kinda skeery of them bathing girls,—
My wife is so all-fired strict.

—Atlanta, Ga.

THE PULLMAN PORTER

"WHAT'S the matter, Abe? You're looking blue;
Has Lady Luck gone back on you?"
"Sure has; Lady Luck done cut me dead,
Bad luck come to me instead.

"You know that yaller porter on sixty-three.
The one who runs opposite me?

He's been shining 'round that girl of mine
'Cause when he lays over I's on the line.

"Mary Loo, she thinks that's fine,
Has two sweethearts at one time,
Without no chance for them to meet,
She could love um both and treat um sweet.

"He's giving her candy and treating her swell;
Says he's rich; the lies he tells!
But the thing what's done got my goat,
He just give her a sealskin coat.

"Lady done left it on the train,
She'll never see that coat again;
I tole Mary Loo that coat was stole.
She said, 'Nigger, my love is cold.'

"Now he's got a standin' I can't bust;
Never seen a girl that I could trust;
Pullman porters ain't got no show,
You gets real lovin', then away you go.

"When you're gone, I know it's true
Some other porter's in the place of you;
They ain't going to get the best of me;
I'll fix um good,—you watch and see!

"I'll get two of the lovin'est girls I can find,
Put one on each end of the line,
No matter which end I lays over at,
Do you know any better plan than that?

—Atlanta, Ga.

I AIN'T LOOKING FOR MUCH CROWD

I'VE been doing a lot of thinking
'Bout what the preacher said,
All about this going to Heaven
And being an Angel when we's dead;
How you got to be meek and lowly,
Don't even dast be proud,
Or they won't let you in at all—
I ain't looking for much crowd.

There's some Methodists and Baptists
And other kinds, I guess,
That's living up to standard,
And they may pass the test.
But they ain't just sort of up-to-date,
Don't dress none too loud,
Nor act as if life's worth living—
I ain't looking for much crowd.

If when they made them rules
They'd left out a lot of don'ts and dos,

So we could do a few more don'ts,
And the dos we could sort of choose;
I know they would be a pile of folks
Who as it is won't be allowed,
Would have a chance to go to Heaven—
I ain't looking for much crowd.

When there's some thing I wants to do,
It's always a don't, it seems to me;
And if I don't want to do a thing,
It's a do—it's sure to be.
Now, if they turn them right around,
If that could be allowed,
Might not get into Heaven at all,
Cause they would be such powerful crowd.

I ain't done sent no reservation,
I don't reckon it's required;
I knows that they'll be plenty room,
When my time on earth expired.
When I read the regulations
And see what little is allowed,
Thems mighty strict requirements,
I ain't looking for much crowd.

—Jackson, Miss.

THE NEWSBOY OF TODAY

I HAVE wondered why it is
That on our city streets,
The newsboys are disappearing fast
And in their place one often meets
Some poor old woman, or old man,
Our daily papers selling,
With voice so low, you can hardly hear,
Replacing the newsboys yelling?

There was a nice old lady
Who has been selling papers on Main Street,
She always had a pleasant smile,
The kind one likes to greet;
I asked her if she would tell me,
Why she felt obliged to sell.
"Can't you find something easier
That will pay you just as well?"

She smiled: 'What could I do?
There isn't any work for me.
I am not young any more,
Why, I'm past sixty-three.
I'm not strong enough for house work,
And easy work, I don't know how.
I had no schooling when I was young,
That's why I sell papers now.

"Young folks now are smarter,
They go to school every day
And learn a trade or business,
Or something that will pay,
So when they get old and feeble,
They will have something laid aside,
And not be obliged to come to this,
And abandon all one's pride.

"That's why newsboys are fewer,
And us old folks take their place.
We are an object lesson,
We have fallen in the race.
They can see what has come to us,
And profit by our example.
To do their best while young,
And in age, they will have ample."

—Dallas, Texas.

NEGLECT

I OBSERVED an incident not long ago
That gave me cause for thought;
I believe there was a lesson there
That many should be taught.
I would not have seen the point at all,
Nor have had the least idea

Of the importance of the lesson
But from what I chanced to hear.

A little chap about 12 years old,
And as bright as he could be,
Asked a question of his father
And stood waiting patiently.
But the father did not answer,
Only said, "Go on and play;
Can't you see I have no time
To bother with you today?"

The little lad walked away
With such a down-cast look,
That I wondered what the reason was,
And an opportunity I took
To ask the little fellow
Why he looked so sad.
His reply will bring a lesson home
To the father of every lad.

"Ah, Gee! There ain't no trouble,
He's that way all the time,
Just cause I's a kid, I guess;
To men he's mighty fine.
But when I asks a question
'Bout something I want to know,
He says I'm just a bother;
Us kids don't get a show.

"Just let him wait 'till I grow up
And get to be a man,
Or get just a little older
So I will understand,
Then I won't ask questions;
Maybe then he'll ask of me,
But I will sure remember
The way he used to be."

It seems to me that fathers,
Yes, and mothers, too,
Have a sacred trust
And a duty they must do;
How can we expect to hold
The confidence of a child
If we consider them a bother
And their questions not worth while?

What about this little lad,
As from boy to youth he grows?
He has some perplexing problems
As every father knows.
Can a parent well withhold that trust?
Stop a minute and reflect.
Indifference, lack of confidence,
Is down-right, criminal neglect.

—Muskogee, Okla.

NATURE'S RADIO

YES, the radio is wonderful,
The wireless is a marvel, too;
The telephone and telegraph,
Seems no end to what man can do.
And yet with all these new inventions,
With improvements every day,
There are some simple natural forces
That are still unused in any way.

What is this power or knowledge,
That seems denied of man,
That many lower forms of life
Possess and seem to understand?
The birds and butterflies and even ants—
And of this there is no doubt—
Have a method of communication,
That we know not a thing about.

Take a bird or a butterfly
And separate it from its mate,
Distance makes no difference—
They seem to communicate.
The moment that you free them
They will start to join each other,
And travel many hundred miles,
Until they are together.

Instinct, men of science call it;
But I do not believe it is so;
Is it not a kind of telepathy,
Or a principle that they know?
Will man in his search for knowledge,
Understand and use and know
This greatest of inventions,
The NATURE'S RADIO?

—Atlanta, Ga.

JUST THINKING

I JUST sit here a thinking
In a lonesome sort of way,
Of all the trials and hard-ships
And pleasures, too, and say!
Do you know it kind of seems to me,
Tho some have been hard to bear,
If it wasn't so inteded,
They wouldn't have been there.

I don't know but after all
The One who keeps Life's book,
Will give us credit on account
And nothing overlook,
And when a statement's rendered
As it surely'll be some day,
He'll credit up our hardships
And give us joy in pay.

So what's the use of growling
And making a lot of fuss?
Your account 's in a better shape
Than many another cuss
Who has had nothing but joy and pleasure;
He'll get his and get it good,
For we all must have our pay.

—Little Rock, Ark.

PAST AND FUTURE

NOT yesterday! It's today that counts;
Yesterday is done; the books are closed;
The causes of yesterday effect today,
Each daily record is the thing that shows.
Tomorrow's pages are always blank,
No entry made until the deed is done;
It is the acts right now that make or mar
And set a pattern for the days to come.

We cannot live the past again—
The past is gone; its effects remain.
There is only one way to make amends,
To repair a loss or remove a stain.
It can not be done in time that has passed,
Nor are we sure of the days to come;
It is the time right now—this very hour—
The present hour is the only one.

If we are but earnest in our desire
Can we not live our best for a single hour?
And though our best be poor indeed,
The effort alone will increase our power.
This hour patterns the next to come,
Hour by hour, just for today;
The causes today effect tomorrow,
We can plan the future in no other way.

—Muskogee, Okla.

THE ANSWERED PRAYER

"JESUS, tender Shepherd, hear me,
Bless Thy little lamb tonight;
Through the darkness be Thou near me,
Keep me safe 'till morning light.
Bless my dear mother,
And my dear daddy,
And my two little brothers,
And help me to be a good girl. Amen!"

Ah, my little girl, you little know,
When you are kneeling by your mother's side.
The mighty power of your simple prayer
As you ask the Lord to bless and guide.
Your prayer is answered. That I know,
For I receive your blessing every day;

Your loving thoughts are always with me,
They help to guide me on my way.

It does not matter where I am,
In the city's crowd, or all alone,
At your bedtime hour, there comes to me
Your thoughts of love, the call of home.
You ask the Lord to bless your daddy?
The Lord does bless me with your love.
It is a power, a force, a mighty blessing,
Like a guiding hand from Heaven above.

—Atlanta, Ga.

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